

*Shiur L'Yom Shishi*¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Acharei Mot:*** **Leviticus 18:20-30**
 Haftarah: **Ezekiel 22:19**
 B'rit Chadasha: **I Corinthians 6:17**

***The native-born and the aliens living among you
must not do any of these detestable things.***
[Leviticus 18:26]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 119:163-165

This Week's Amidah prayer focus is Petition #4, *Ga'al*, the Petition for Redemption.

V'el-eishet amiteicha lo-titen sh'chovteicha l'zara – *And you are not to give your seed of intimacy to any other man's wife or intended ... l'tom'ah-vah* - *for this will make her tamei [i.e. conflicted/fragmented/unwhole].* **Leviticus 18:20a.**

The holy fire of human sexuality – which our Creator has designed for the reproduction and continuation of the human species - has only one proper place – the committed covenant marriage of one man and one woman. Indulging any physical/sexual attraction, or even intentionally stimulating, much less satisfying, any level of sexual urge, desire, or appetite, outside the bounds of a God-ordained marriage relationship is like lighting a fire in your living room floor. It makes something the Holy One designed to be a wonderful thing – a partnership in His work of Creation – into a potential disaster.

Since all our passion, and the future of our species and the planet, all belong to Him, the Holy One does not stop this part of the discourse on Holiness with a general discussion of the human tendency to get all strung out on romance and sexually charged thought, speech, and conduct. He goes on to cover some very 'hot topics' in the 21st Century – topics of sexual appetite and curiosity run amuck. There are several areas that the Holy One instructs us to avoid.

If the Holy One Is Not Lord of our Primal, Social, and Sexual Urges and Appetites, He is Not Truly Lord of Anything About Us

Knowing, communing with, and serving the Holy One is the Ultimate Pleasure a human being can experience. He Who created us and Who both understands and loves us more than anyone is the most pleasant, fascinating, and 'completing' companion we could ever have. ***In His Presence is fullness of joy. At His Right***

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Hand are the most excellent, transcendent, and enduring pleasures. Psalm 16:11. A part of being the ‘holy ones’ we are called to be therefore involves learning to joyfully and enthusiastically yield to the Bridegroom-King’s cleansing protocols [washing with His Word] and to therefore exercise increasing levels of restraint in regard to all our fleshly appetites and urges – including, of course, those related to sexual curiosity and expression. This should come as no surprise to us. At Sinai, when the Voice of the Holy One shook the Heavens and the Earth, we heard Him proclaim: ***Lo tin’af*** [i.e. you will not participate in improper and dangerous mixtures in violation of the Covenant (including, but not limited to engaging in thoughts, conversations or actions smacking of adultery)] and ***Lo tachmod eshet re’eicha v’avdo v’amato v’shoro v’chamoro v’chol asher l’re’eicha*** [i.e. “You will not desire, covet, take pleasure from, or delight over² your neighbor’s wife, his slave, his maid, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that is your neighbor’s].

The prophetic announcements that reverberated in our ears and across Sinai’s heights on 6 Sivan in the year of the Exodus spell out, in general form, *how the Holy One sees His Betrothed Bride*. They describe *the way we look to Him through His eyes of love*. They explain to us *what He is molding and shaping us to be*. In pronouncing such declarations the Holy One was not just telling us ‘do this, and ‘don’t do that’ like some dictator; He was instead, *prophesying over us*, and *reshaping our characters and indeed our very natures*, by the sheer power of His spoken words. He was re-creating our natures – such that we would be able to keep all of our appetites, as well as all activities in which we engage in the ‘pursuit of happiness’ confined within proper, wholesome, healthy boundaries. But even more than that, the prophetic empowerments spoken over us by the Holy One at Sinai had – and still have – the Holy One’s Breath of eternal life in them. They are *living chunks of pure life energy - seeds of righteousness* which the Creator has planted in our souls. They have enormous quantities of life energy in them, awaiting the right environment. They are constantly looking for a shaft of Divine light to cause them to germinate, a sprinkling of living water to enable them to sprout, and a season of Divine embrace to incubate and nurture them, and cause them to leaf, and to bud, and to flower, and to bear and mature fruit for all the world to eat.

When the Holy One spoke over man ***p’ru ur’vu*** [*Be Fruitful and multiply!*] He prophetically instilled in us not only the capacity to do so but the *drive* to accomplish this. In other words He *gave* us sexual energy, so that we could fulfill

² The Hebrew verb is *chamad, chet, mem, dalet*, Strong’s Hebrew word #2530, pronounced *khaw-mawd’*. This is the verb root which describes the way *Chava* [Eve], after listening to the Serpent, began to look upon the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil right before she took and ate of it.

His plan. But mankind, as merely ‘be fruitful and multiply’. We have a magnificent mission on earth and an opposed to animals, has other purposes to fulfill than awesome Divine destiny ordained in Heaven which make the ‘be fruitful and multiply’ empowerment seem tame by comparison.

We who have been redeemed by the Holy One are *not to behave like animals*. We are *not to be controlled by our lusts* like pagans. Just as we have been called to improve and introduce the Kingdom of the Holy One into our world by sanctifying time, sanctifying the Land, sanctifying food, and sanctifying life, we have also been called to *sanctify* the precious gift of sexuality with which we have been entrusted by our Maker. We are the Holy One’s chosen vessels to model to the world the Divinely ordained approach to, purpose of, and limitations on, sexually-oriented thoughts, words, and deeds. *If the salt has lost its savor, wherewith will the earth – and its people - be salted?*

Contained in today’s aliyah therefore are more specifics as to how we are to incorporate the *lo tinaf* [you will not participate in improper and dangerous mixtures in violation of the Covenant (including, but not limited to engaging in thoughts, conversations or actions smacking of adultery)] and *lo tachmod* [you will not desire, lust after, covet, or take pleasure inappropriately] empowerments of the Holy One. Our Bridegroom-King today makes very specific prophetic and creative announcements regarding the limits His people are to place on the exercise of their God-given sexuality – how we are to harness and curb the drive and energy, and apply the capacity, given to us by the Holy One in order that the species called man may ‘be fruitful and multiply’ and establish functional families that bring honor and glory to the Creator of life. The basic principle of Torah regarding sexuality is that its exercise is intended to be restricted to the context of healthy, moral, monogamous, life-long relationship - One man, one woman, fully engaged in the great enterprise of uniting as one flesh.

Our Bridegroom Specifically Warns Against Alternative Lifestyle Choices That Other Cultures May Find Acceptable

One of the types of self-indulgent romantic/sexual conduct very much in the news and the public eye in this era is what the media likes to label ‘sexual preference’, ‘sexual orientation’, ‘LGBTQ’, ‘same-sex attraction’, and/or ‘gay/lesbian lifestyle’. The ‘danger zone’ choices and follow-through behaviors at the root of this phenomena is directly addressed by the Holy One in Torah. This destructive, self-obsessed form of debauchery is nothing new. But in days when our culture trains us from childhood that the reason we are alive is to have as much sex as we can, as often as we can, with as many other people as we can, in as many different

ways and forms as we can, it behooves us to go back to the Torah, and see what our Creator and Bridegroom-King has to say on the subject. Regarding the mating of male and male, in particular³, the Holy One says very specifically:

V'et zachar lo tish'kav mish'kevei ishah to'evah hi

Do not lie with a male as you would with a woman; this is an abomination/disgusting perversion.
[Leviticus 18:22]

Our Maker warns us against letting our thoughts, desires, urges, and appetites get control us to the point we engage in sexually-oriented behaviors with another person of the same gender in the strongest possible terms. He describes it in one word - *to'evah*. What is *to'evah*, you ask? It is usually translated into English as *abomination*. It means a *disgusting* and dangerous *perversion/twisting/corruption*. It means taking something designed for a Kingdom purpose – *i.e.* our organs of reproduction – and using them for a different purpose altogether, namely solely to do that which cannot possibly lead to reproduction, and instead serves only to indulge and gratify the most base and destructive fleshly lusts our fallen wills can come up with.

Why? Because every second spent wasting time, passion, and energy in such vile, worthless, and self-destructive pursuits is a second we are not spending doing anything close to what He designed, created, brought into this world, and breathed His Own Breath into us to empower us to do.

The Holy One knows we have plenty of important, life-giving thoughts to think, words to speak, and actions to engage in. He has made sure of it. His Creation provides endless opportunities for us to engage in extremely fruitful, meaningful, fulfilling pursuits. For us to choose to ignore all the things He has put us on earth to do simply because we cannot – or do not want to – resist the urge to satiate our basest curiosities and most indulgent sensual/sexual appetites, is nothing but blatant self-idolatry.

Lest we have any misconception about the disastrous end-result such kinds of behavior will have upon our lives, our spheres of influence, and our assigned mission on earth, our Bridegroom-King tells us:

³ Lesbianism is not specifically addressed in this passage, although the clear implication of the phrase '*mish'kevei ishah*' in Leviticus 18:22 is that sexual relations are to be only between a man and a woman. See also Romans 1:26-27: ***God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.***

Al-titam'u b'chol-eleh

Do not let yourselves be defiled by any of these acts.

ki v'chol-eleh nitme'u ha-goyim asher-ani meshale'ach mipnechem

It was as a result of them that the nations I am driving out before you became defiled.

V'titma ha-aretz v'efkod avonah aleyha

The land became defiled; so I directed My Judgment at the sin committed there,

V'taki ha-aretz et-yoshveyha

And the land vomited out its inhabitants.

[Leviticus 18:24]

The Holy One does not want us to conform to the baseness of any society on earth. We are not to imitate – act and talk like – the people we see in popular music bands, popular television shows, and beer and blue jean commercials. A holy land groans with eager expectation for a *holy people*. Meanwhile, let us consider one other aspect of our Divine calling.

Relating Properly to Those Who are Citizens of Another Kingdom

All acts arising from obsession with sexuality/sensual pleasure – whether those acts are classified as heterosexual or homosexual in nature – are *an abomination to our Covenant Partner in Heaven*. But that does not mean that followers of the Covenant have a right – or even an excuse - to take up offense against or act in a belligerent or demeaning way toward people who are not ‘*of the covenant*’ and who choose to engage in such conduct. We are not to *participate* in the perverse things other peoples of the world do. We are also not to *encourage* anyone – whether a party to the covenant or not –to engage in behavior our Covenant Partner in Heaven labels as ‘*toebah*’. We are not to *condone* any such conduct, nor suggest it is either *normal*, *natural*, or in any respect healthy. But, the WORST thing we can do in response to the perversity of people outside Covenant-relationship with the Holy One is to adopt self-righteous and condemning attitudes toward those people. The Holy One has not, you see, given us a mandate to go throughout the world seeking out adulterers or persons engaging in homosexual activities, exposing their sin, and quoting Scripture at them. Indeed, if a person is not *actively participating in the covenant* then for us to quote Scripture at them is to *speak in an unintelligible foreign language*. For people in covenant with the Holy One to go into strongholds of the other kingdom therefore and act superior, holding up signs with Scriptures written on them that talk about how bad the sins of the other kingdom are is not only *physically dangerous* but *totally counter-productive*. Scripture is the language of OUR kingdom – it is NOT the language of theirs. The Scripture is life for *us who are in covenant with its Author*, but is just condemnation for *those who are not*. Keep this in mind: *What Scripture did*

*Y'shua quote to the woman caught in adultery? What Scripture did He quote to the Woman at the Well who He knew was in the throes of an adulterous relationship? He did not quote Scripture at these wounded, hurting people. They could not have received it. So while He rebuked religious people in a strait-forward way for their hypocrisy, he showed *nothing but kindness* to those who were slaves of the dominion of darkness. I know this truth may shock some of you. But perhaps we need to learn that a part of our covenant identity is that we – unlike the rest of the world - owe both the debt of *humility* and the debt of *love* to every human being – no matter how despicable their behavior may be. Within our midst we by all means need to *shun* – and *educate our children against* – unScriptural sexual exploitation and indulgence in all its ugly, destructive manifestations. But in dealing with citizens of the other kingdom[s] of the world, we need to let our actions be guided by wisdom, humility, and love.*

The Holy One began the section of Torah in which we currently find ourselves by saying:

*I am the Holy One your God.
You are not to follow the ways of Egypt where you once lived,
nor the ways of Kana'an, where I will be bringing you.
Do not follow any of their behaviors.
What you are to do is to asah My mishpatim and sh'mar My chukot, and halak in them:
I am the Holy One your God.
Sh'mar My decrees and laws, because by asah-ing them
ha-Adam [the man of God's river of life] lives.
I am The Holy One.*

[Leviticus 18:1-5, Rabbi's son transliteration/translation]

The Holy One does not, of course, stop this part of the discourse on Holiness with a general discussion of the human tendency to get all strung out on romance and sexually-charged thought, speech, and conduct. He goes on to cover a very 'hot topic' in the 21st Century – same-sex attraction. He wants to give us HIS PERSPECTIVE on that topic, at least as it may try to rear its ugly head among His covenant people.

Looking at What Some Call 'Same-Sex Attraction' From the Holy One's Perspective

One of the types of self-indulgent romantic/sexual conduct very much in the news and the public eye today – what men like to call 'same-sex attraction' or 'homosexuality' – is directly addressed by the Holy One in Torah. This destructive, self-obsessed form of debauchery is nothing new. But in days when our culture trains us from childhood that the reason we are alive is to have as much sex as we can, as often as we can, with as many other people as we can, in as many

different ways and forms as we can, it behooves us to go back to the Torah, and see what our Creator and Bridegroom-King has to say on the subject.

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Our Maker warns us against letting our thoughts, desires, urges, and appetites get control us to the point we engage in sexually-oriented behaviors with another person of the same gender in the strongest possible terms. He describes it in one word - *to'evah*. *To'evah* is the term the Holy One uses to describe a thing or a person that embodies the ultimate degree of toxic uncleanness. A thing or person that has degenerated into a *to'evah* is dangerously *perverse*. Such a person or thing is releasing into the environment an *irreversible toxic flow of corruption*. Whenever you see the word *to'evah*, understand, therefore, that something or someone that the Holy One designed for a Kingdom purpose has been appropriated by the enemy of our souls and used against us and our Creator.

The primary thing the Holy One wants us to recognize in its *to'evah* form – and to therefore avoid like the plague – is the misuse of our organs of covenantal reproduction. These organs – and the desires and appetites and capabilities that come with them – have a Kingdom purpose. But they nevertheless can become *to'evah*. That which was intended for the good of the world can be used to hasten its descent into lawlessness, chaos, and self-destruction. How does this happen? It happens when we adopt a practice of using our organs of covenant reproduction for purposes in direct opposition to the use for which they were intended. This happens when the serpent and our fallen flesh team up to entice us to use our sexuality to indulge and gratify our own fleshly lusts – and use our capacities of sexuality in ways that which cannot possibly lead to covenantal reproduction.

Abomination? ‘Disgusting perversion’? Dangerous? Corrupting? Those are extremely *strong words* to describe things the world argues is just ‘*doing what comes naturally*’. *Naturally like an animal*, perhaps; but not naturally like a creature made to function as the earthly shadow of the Holy One. Our Divine

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Bridegroom knows what we were made for. He sees the great things we are capable of. He also knows how every form of misuse of sexuality – and the organs connected with sexuality - can be. So He describes every indulgence of the eyes, the ears, the mind, or the heart in both inter-family and same-sex attraction as being every bit as far removed from His pathway of life, health, and peace as copulating with an animal. See **Leviticus 18:23**. Why? Why is our keeping sexual urge and activity within the healthy parameters He has established in the Covenant so important to Him? Because He knows that every day human beings spend wasting time, passion, and energy in such worthless, covenant-toxic, and self-destructive pursuits is a day they are not able to spend doing anything close to what He designed, created, brought into this world, and breathed His Own Breath into us to empower us to do.

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All of that is true - but It is also true that the WORST thing we can do in response to the perversity of people outside Covenant-relationship with the Holy One is to adopt self-righteous and condemning attitudes toward those people.

The Holy One has not given us a mandate to go throughout the world seeking out adulterers or persons engaging in homosexual activities, exposing their sin, and quoting Scripture at them. Indeed, if a person is not *actively participating in the covenant* then for us to quote Scripture at them is to *speak in an unintelligible foreign language*. For people in covenant with the Holy One to go into strongholds of the other kingdom therefore and act superior, holding up signs with Scriptures written on them that talk about how bad the sins of the other kingdom are is not only *physically dangerous* but *totally counter-productive*.

You see, dear one, Scripture is the language of OUR kingdom – it is NOT the language of theirs. The Scripture is life for *us who are in covenant with its Author*, but is just condemnation for *those who are not*.

Keep this in mind: *What Scripture did Yeshua quote to the woman caught in adultery? What Scripture did He quote to the Woman at the Well who He knew was in the throes of an adulterous relationship?* He did not quote Scripture at these wounded, hurting people. They could not have received it. So while He rebuked religious people in a strait-forward way for their hypocrisy, he showed *nothing but kindness* to those who were slaves of the dominion of darkness.

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of our covenant identity is that we – unlike the rest of the world - owe both the debt of *humility* and the debt of *love* to every human being – no matter how despicable their behavior may be. Within our midst we by all means need to *shun* – and *educate our children against* – unScriptural sexual exploitation and indulgence in all its ugly, destructive manifestations. But in dealing with citizens of the other kingdom[s] of the world, we need to let our actions be guided by wisdom, humility, and love.

Questions For Today's Study

1. The societies of Egypt and Kena'an were intensely self-centered and self-indulgent societies, not at all unlike America today. They took romance and sexuality – which were given for purposes of human reproduction by the Holy One [remember, the first man, Adam, was created as combined male/female, and the feminine aspect was removed from Him when the Holy One made woman from his rib] – and decided “the more the better”. All natural inhibitions were stripped away – and they sought to introduce either romance or sexuality into every relationship (as people on sitcom television shows in America tend to introduce sexuality into virtually every conversation). Why? Because they were searching for something. Our inclination toward romance and our urges of sexuality are intended to direct us to the Holy One, our ultimate partner, for Him to reveal to us His best. It is actually union with Him, spiritually, and consequently getting into the center of His Will physically, in this life, which our souls desire. In that union is our satisfaction, and our fulfillment. But the societies around us accept a cheap counterfeit. And they are left with nothing of value. We *must* be different.

What responsibility(ies) did the Holy One intend for a man to undertake toward a woman before romantic interaction or sexual intimacy could exist without injury/damage [physical, emotional, and spiritual] to both partners?

2. There is one abominable practice warned against in today's aliyah which seemingly does not involve either romantically or sexually oriented thought, speech, or activity.

[A] What is that practice?

[B] What does the mention of that evil practice tell you about how the Holy One feels about raising children and prioritizing “family”?

[C] What does the Holy One say the land of Israel did to the Canaanites for engaging in perversions like same-sex unions?

[D] What does the Holy One say should happen to the individual who engages in any of these perversions?

[E] What does the Holy One say will happen to any group of people [nation] who accepts such perversions as a “way” or a lifestyle?

3. In today's Haftarah reading from Ezekiel the Holy One speaks to the House of Israel in one of its darkest, most rebellious moments, and says:

*Because you are all become dross,
therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Yerushalayim.*

[Ezekiel 22:19]

What does the Holy One intend to do with the 'House of Israel' once He gathers them into the midst of the Holy City?

4. In the B'rit Chadasha reading for today we read that in contrast to him who joins himself with a 'prostitute, one who joins Himself to the Holy One becomes one spirit with Him. **I Corinthians 6:17.**

What effect do you think being one spirit with the Holy One would have on the way you approach life? Entertain yourself? Talk to people? Treat people? Respond to provocation, insult, attempts at manipulation, and betrayal?

*May we model to the world what it looks like
to be one in spirit with the Holy One!*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 119:163-165

*I hate and abhor lying,
but I love Your law.
Seven times a day I praise You because of Your righteous judgments.
Great peace have those who love Your law,
and nothing causes them to stumble.*